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ABSTRACT

Racial identity and its meaning is as necessary to the black researcher as are the tools of his profession. With the rise in racial awareness, identity, and pride in Afro-Americans, there has been concurrent understanding of the hypocritical values which are transmitted through education, and a growing repudiation of them. There must be a concerted effort within education to utilize the minority professional as a key to institutional change. Through minority consultants and researchers, different educational needs can be recognized, customized programs designed, and evaluations relative to varying needs be conducted. Black teachers and researchers, unhappy with the kinds of tests and personality inventories which are available for use with black children, must be willing to devise their own methods of assessment. The second step of seeking approval from the profession is a necessary and essential one. As most black professionals have competence through knowledge of their white peers' operational difficulties in achieving reform they can and must also serve as catalyst, interpreters (of white values to blacks), researchers, consultants, and program analyst. Black consultants and organizations must establish themselves as reservoirs of talent, knowledge, and insight in establishing creative ways to develop, test and "spot the bugs" in new programs as they operate in urban schools. Black scholars must challenge those who cling to the supremacy of their "scientific" authority. (Author/JM)

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Researchers, Consultants and Urban Schools: A Black Perspective

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Researchers, Consultants and Urban Schools

The melting-pot ideology of this country has failed dismally. In an unprecedented manner, black researchers and professionals are challenging the set of rules which other professionals have so long abided by. These traditional systems of rights and privileges are quite inadequate for black professionals who are engaged in furthering the intellectual expansion creativity and change necessary from institutions serving largely minority communities. Just as traditionally white professionals reflect public values shared by members of their larger identity group, so will black professionals. This exercise of privileges by blacks has produced a new phenomenon in the social and educational order of white professionals; namely, the black consultant and black owned research organization. Only a few whites have understood, aided and appreciated this healthy response to the unique problems of racism and inequality in urban schools and society.

A Concept of Cultural Pluralism for Researchers*

At long last, this country is moving towards a realistic concept of the pluralistic make-up of its people. Racial identity and its meaning is as necessary to the black researcher as are the tools of his profession. With the rise in racial awareness, identity and pride in Afro-Americans, there has been concurrent understanding of the hypocritical values which are transmitted through education, and a growing repudiation of them. There must be a concerted effort within education to utilize the minority professional as a key to

*Some of this material is drawn from: Cultural Pluralism" A Mandate for Change in Education - Appleton-Century Crofts "73 Stent, M., Hazard, W., Rivlin, H.

institutional change. These researchers, consultants and administrators can often merge their professional skills and cultural heritage in such a way as to widen the cracks in the white-washed walls of opportunity.

The determination by Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Asian-Americans, American Indians, and Chicanos to reject integration is based on their experience in America. This experience includes the snail-paced desegregation of public schools and universities, the incredible scarcity of Indian, Chicano, and other non-white scholars among the brain sculptors of society, and our peculiarly egotistical policy of defining and solving world issues from the white man's perspective. In the classrooms of this country, integration has too often assumed that non-white students must be inculcated with the prevailing white values before they can be truly "educated" in the transmitted tradition of American culture.

In similar fashion, schools as well as teacher education programs perpetuate the notion that middle-class white "standards" and middle-class white "excellence" are the ultimate tests of legitimacy and approval. Culturally pluralistic approaches to research and education flatly reject this notion. Rather, it demands standards drawn from more than one culture. Characteristics of excellence must not be restricted to the dominant white culture. We rarely ask professional researchers, consultants and educators to examine the bases of, or justification or, their judgment of standards. The stress on achievement tests for children and "measuring up to standards", in professional education has meant to teachers and researchers of minority group students, measuring up to culturally-biased "white"

standards.

Some data on school populations may give needed perspective to the reality of cultural diversity. In the fall of 1970, over 51 million children were enrolled in public and private elementary and secondary schools.[1] The most recent (1968) data indicate that 14.5% (6,282,200) pupils were Black, 4.6% (2,003,000) were Spanish-Americans and 142,630 (less than 1/2 of one percent) were American Indians.[2] Predictably, the twenty-one largest school systems reported substantially different racial-cultural "mixes" in their school districts for the same year (1968). Of the total pupil population of 4,728,886, Black pupils numbered 1,921,465 (40.6%), 502,598 (10.6%) were Spanish-American, 7,912 (0.2%) were American Indians, and 68,680 (1.5%) were Oriental. The remainder of 4,228,231 (47.1%) including Caucasion, were reported as "others". Taking Chicago as an example, the most recent published enrollment figures[3] for that city's public schools details the ethnic and racial distribution for 1970 and 1971:

	1970		1971	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
Caucasian	199,969	34.6	188,312	32.4
Black	316,711	54.8	320,797	55.8
American Indian	1,042	.2	1,184	.2
Oriental	3,883	.7	4,424	.8
Latin	56,374	9.7	59,778	10.4
Mexican	24,066	4.2	25,314	4.4
Puerto Rican	26,176	4.5	27,303	4.8
Cuban	2,673	.4	3,510	.6
Other Latin	3,459	.6	3,351	.6
Total	577,679	100.0	574,495	100.0

1. Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1971, U.S. Dept. of Commerce.
2. Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Los Angeles, Memphis, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Portland, St. Louis, San Diego, San Francisco, and Washington,D.C.
3. The Chicago Tribune, November 23, 1971, p. 14, section 3

Obviously, in most urban centers, the so-called cultural and ethnic minorities constitute a majority. To postulate our education on bases other than cultural diversity and pluralistic norms seems to ignore the realities of our schools' population. To continue to largely exclude minority professionals and researchers from the business of establishing standards is foolhardy.

The retreat from integration, as it has been practiced, does not necessarily mean permanent separation. Substantial segments of excluded ethnic cultures no longer accept either the cultural or proclaimed wisdom of white America when to do so violates the integrity of the minority cultures. For minority cultures, a new strategy for teacher education and the evaluation of institutions like schools can come about only if the educational and economic political world system,as the white man has constructed it, is demystified, analyzed and revealed for what it is in actual operation. Much of what is commonly labelled history, is more like a fable -- a distorted fable at that. Carter Woodson, a Black scholar, noted in 1937:

> In our own particular history we should not dim one bit the lustre of any star in our firmament. Let no one be so thoughtless as to decry the record of the makers of the United States of America. We should not learn less of George Washington, 'First in War, First in Peace, and First in the hearts of his countrymen;' but we should learn something also of the three thousand Negro soldiers of the American revolution who helped make this 'Father of our Country' possible...We should in no way whatever withhold assistance from the effort to make the world safe for democracy, but we should teach our citizenry history rather than propaganda and thus make this country safe for all elements of the population at home.[4]

4. Woodson, Carter G. The Story of the Negro Retold, "Truth Not to be Neglected," Journal of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1935

Evaluation and Urban Schools

The term "accountability" is now the word for those sophisticated in walking the tightrope within the ring of growing concern about the quality of our urban schools. The public has demanded these schools be subject to rigorous evaluation. This insistence has increased with the advent of decentralization of schools and subsequent movement toward community control. Minority participants in decision making on community school boards demand to know what is "wrong" and insist that it be made "right". This process is not simple.

Blacks, Puerto Ricans, and Chicanos do not want their children "experimented upon", but nevertheless only a comprehensive, and formalized evaluation system can ensure that their voices are heard; that standards 'which they adhere to' will be set and performance measured.

Two important steps are necessary in any evaluation:

1. competently defining the standards that must be adhered to, and
2. comparing the performance of the institution with the standards.

The chief concern of many New York City schools, is the process of defining appropriate standards. Evaluation in urban schools has most often consisted of determining whose expectations will constitute performance standards; comparing student, teacher, parental involvement, or program performance against these standards; and in giving this data back to determine if expectations are being met.

When the knowledge, cultural heritage and values of a minority group are consistently ignored, how can standards for their children

be defined? Standards are derived from knowledge and value, and value is often the determining factor. Value determines those portions of the multitudinous aspects of knowledge which will be used as a standard, and then confers authority on that standard. The factors or materials to be judged are also determined by value.

In New York State, the imposition of standards and priorites for eligibility for Title I funding must be reading, mathematics and bilingual education. Although these value judgments are a necessary part of educational evaluation, their presence and determination have never been made explicit, and standards have been applied across the board with only lip service to the minority consumers' values and criteria for judging performance. Who is to judge that symbolic reading and decoding is more important than the performing arts, music and other humanistic values for urban New York City children?

It has been assumed that Spanish-dominant children must learn to read and write English in order to achieve in our schools. Too often, they have been tracked to "slow" classes without regard to the pertinent research and experiences of minority researchers and psychologists[5] which now tell us that bilingualism is an asset; that learning to read and write in ones dominant tongue will most likely lead to increased motivation and skill development.

Tests: A New Look

Only an individual with an intimate knowledge of the cultures,

5. See Adelante: An Emerging Design for Mexican-American Education (Manuel A. Mazon) Ed. Center for Communication Research. The Univ. of Texas at Austin. Teacher Corp. Grant OEGO-71-0273 (7150

and one possessing the tools of test construction can fill the bill of creating reading skill and comprehension tests which educators are demanding for Latin and Chicano Spanish-dominant pupils in our schools. Unless researchers and consultants are recognized and speak out aggressively against technological racism we will continue to have such examples of the misuse of tests in our society as in the Diana[6] case.

The Education Code of California, as in many other states, maintains separate specialized classes for mentally retarded children.. Educators and others recognize that, because of the inherent stigma in such classification, great injustice would be done should a child be incorrectly placed.

> "In California, between the ages of four and eight, a number of school children are given either the Standard-Binet or Wexler (WISC) only in English to measure their intelligence ability. A score of 70-55 on the WISC test or 68-52 on the Stanford-Binet results in the child being placed in an EMR (Educable Mentally Retarded) class. In this test case the children were nine Mexican-American children and had been placed in an EMR class. When tested solely in English by a non-Spanish speaking tester, the scores rnaged from 30-70 with a mean score of 63 1/2. On November 1 and 2, 1969, each was individually retested on WISC test (in English and/or Spanish) and each was permitted to respond in either language. Seven of the nine had a score rnaging from 2 to 19 points over the cut-off. One of the other two scored right on the line, and the ninth student was three points below.
>
> Diana's score improved 49 points over an earlier Stanford-Binet test. Her brother's score jumped 22 points; three other children showed gains of 20, 14 and 10 points with the average gain being 15 points.
>
> In California there are approximately 85,000 children in EMR classes. A study of the racial distribution in the state's public schools during the 1966-67 school year revealed that 26% of the children in EMR classes were of Spanish surname, while such students comprised only 13% of the total student population.

6. Diana, et al vs. State Board of Education, U.S. District Court, Northern District of California No. C-7037RFP.

It is statistically impossible that this maldistribution occurred by random chance (odds in excess of 1 in 100 billion).

In June of 1969, John Plakos of the California Department of Education randomly selected 47 Mexican-American children in EMR classes within the State. Fifty percent were in urban areas and 50% were rural, and they were retested in Spanish. Forty-two of the 47 scored over the IQ ceiling for MR classification; 37 scored 75 or higher; over half scored higher than 80 and one sixth of them scored in the 90's or 100's. Their average improvement over earlier tests were 13.15 IQ points...both sides to the action signed a stipulation and a consent decree was signed...The main points of the Court Order and agreement were that all children whose primary home language is other than English (e.g. Spanish, Chinese, etc.) must be tested in both their primary language and in English. They may be tested only with tests or sections of tests that do not depend on such things as vocabulary, general information (who wrote Romeo and Juliet?) and other similar unfair verbal questions.

The State psychologists are to work on normalizing a new or re-vised IQ test to reflect Mexican-American culture. This test will be normalized by giving it only to California Mexican-Americans so that in the future Mexican American children tested will be judged only by how they compare to the performance of their peers, not the population as a whole. And finally, any school district which has a significant disparity between the percentages of Mexican-American students in its regular classes and in its classes for the retarded must submit an explanation setting out the reasons for their disparity."

In reviewing this case of erroneous placement of Mexican-American children in EMR classes, we have a clearer understanding of how technological racism works. A reasonably scientific discipline was misused, circumverted and bastardized. In this example, it was the testing porfession. Certainly, a psychologist of Mexican-American descent, or a consultant who had worked intimately with the target group, would be most effective in creating tests for judging mental retardation of Mexican-American children. We must extend this con-

7. Charles D. and Rita M. Boags, "The Misuse of a So-Called Psychological Examination for the Selection of Jurors" in Charles Thomas A Black Psychologists View of Community, Glencoe Press, 1971.

cept to cover all minorities, and construct tests with input from minority population, and standardized on the population which it is intended to serve.

The Utility of the Black Experience

The inner-city, black parent has little choice in education, he must submit either to a single value system or commit himself to changing the system by continuing opposition or confrontation. If these providers of tax-monies are to be given the freedom of personal conviction and choice, we must create a pluralistic educational system. Through minority consultants and researchers, different education needs can be recognized, customized programs designed, and evaluations relative to varying needs be conducted. The democratization of our urban schools requires the use of plural standards, the definition of educational needs for each group sharing common ideals, and the provision for different educational programs to meet different needs. Unfortunately, today, in large urban systems, people with dissimilar needs are attending monolithic, hierarchial, monopolistic public schools. These schools are, therefore, insensitive to change. If change is to occur, it must come from drastic budgetary reforms and external force or from skillful, internally-directed,gentle pressure. Such maneuvers are indeed delicate, but with utilization of minority professionals who can create first uncertainty, then awareness of problems, analysis, readiness and committment to change, and hopefully the satisfaction of observed movement, change can be realized...

Black teachers and researchers, unhappy with the kinds of tests and personality inventories which are available for use with black children, must be willing to devise their own methods of assessment. The second step of seeking approval from the profession is a necessary, and essential one. As most black professionals have competence through knowledge of their white peers operational difficulties in achieving reform they can, and must also serve as catalysts, interpreters (of white values to blacks) researchers, consultants, and program analysts. Black researchers and consultants can facilitate necessary educational reform in urban schools by;

1. Becoming increasingly vital in the consultation process with white administrative personnel, by working and interacting with them toward the resolution of problems and the achievement of goals.

2. Uncovering relevant issues, sorting out facts, stimulating ideas for action, and developing a climate of interaction. This action implies a mutuality of two-way communication of information, opinion and freedom for either party to propose or initiate action.

3. A realistic, accepting approach to the resources available; such resources as culture identification, time, knowledge, skill and experience.

4. Serving as a community resource of technical skill, as well as agitator, pressing for new developments and improvements.

5. Encouraging and demanding that new avenues for the black and minority professional with his special cultural and racial insights and experiences be opened up. An example of this is the area of school finance and educational policy. Only a handful of first-rate economists are presently committed to studying the economics of public education; and with fiscal policies due to change, because of court decisions challenging real-estate-tax-based financing of schools -- the demand for a new breed of economists-educator far exceeds the supply.

Black consultants and organizations must establish themselves as reservoirs of talent, knowledge and insight in establishing creative ways to develop, test and "spot the bugs" in new programs as they operate in urban schools. Black scholars cannot give up the search for a social system, the meaning of which society has obscured because of inherent racism. They must, through their professional skill, challenge those who cling to the supremacy of their "scientific" authority. They must be verbal, concise and at all times aware of their convictions and insights derived from the black experience.